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DEPARTMENT FOR AF AND AF/E
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [ET](#) [ER](#) [SO](#)
SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: PRIME MINISTER MELES POSITIVE ON HAWIYE
TALKS, BUT SEES POTENTIAL FOR LIMITED RENEWED FIGHTING

REF: A. NAIROBI 1564 AND PREVIOUS
[1](#)B. ADDIS 1079 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DONALD YAMAMOTO FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (S/NF) SUMMARY: Ethiopia Prime Minister Meles called in Ambassador for an April 10 private meeting to discuss Somalia. He stated that Ethiopian military (ENDF) operations in the Hawiye-controlled northern Mogadishu area against extremist elements were costly but successful, resulting in the Hawiye clan and the Habr-Gedir/Ayr sub-clan limiting activities by extremists and forcing extremist leaders to leave the area. Meles suspects that there is still potential for renewed but limited fighting, to clear out any remaining extremist elements and to stabilize the city prior to the May national reconciliation conference. The Prime Minister gave the impression that he was extremely frustrated with TFG President Yusuf on reaching out to other clan groups, but Meles underscored the importance of the TFG to the reconciliation process. In order to engage the Ayr sub-clan, the Prime Minister requested the U.S. and the international community assure the Ayr that they are not the target, that their property will not be confiscated, and that a solution will be found to resolve any property dispute.

[1](#)2. (S/NF) Finally, Meles understood that recent press articles on "secret prisons" for foreign fighters and a New York Times article on a North Korean shipment to Ethiopia were not criticism of Ethiopia, but part of internal political debates in the U.S. He also complained about Eritrea's destabilizing activities in Somalia and called on the U.S. to threaten President Isaias as a way to moderate Eritrean destabilizing activities in Somalia and other countries. END SUMMARY.

CEASEFIRE HOLDING, HAWIYE TALKS VERY POSITIVE:

[1](#)3. (S/NF) The Prime Minister said that when the ENDF attacked extremist elements in northern Mogadishu, the ENDF took precautions to minimize civilian deaths. He said over 80 percent of the civilian population left the area, thus minimizing what could have been a far worse civilian death toll. The ENDF action to control the stadium was symbolic: demonstrating to the clans and extremist elements the ENDF's

resolve to fight the extremists despite casualties.

¶4. (S/NF) As a result of the ENDF actions, Meles said the level of violence has declined, with mortar strikes at the airport and seaport eliminated and security enhanced. Negotiations with the Hawiye elders have resumed and have led to the clan acting to limit extremist elements. Meles said the Hawiye forced extremist Council of Islamic Courts (CIC) leader Aden Hashi Ayro out of Mogadishu. The talks are positive, and Meles was confident that the Hawiye would be able to marginalize and eliminate extremist elements.

¶5. (S/NF) Meles noted the potential for another round of fighting, albeit smaller in scale. The fighting would be to mop up areas of extremist remnants. Meles gave no timeframe when renewed fighting could resume. But he stressed that the talks with the Hawiye are key to determining if the clans are able to limit extremist activities.

FRUSTRATION OVER THE TFG, AYR STILL KEY TO PEACE,
AND REQUESTS FOR THE U.S. TO ASSIST

¶6. (S/NF) Meles hinted at frustration with TFG President Yusuf, due to Yusuf's lack of effort in reaching out to other clans. But Meles underscored the importance of supporting the TFG and Yusuf in preparation for the national reconciliation conference in May. Meles stressed the importance of the Ayr sub-clan to peace in Mogadishu, and requested that the U.S. and international community help to assure the Ayr that its property and land rights would be respected, and that problems would be resolved through an

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agreed process. Meles also requested the same message be passed to Abubakar Adane, a Hawiye/Abgaal sub-clan member and CIC supporter, in order to reach out to all potential "spoilers" for dialogue.

PRESS LEAKS AND ERITREA

¶7. (S/NF) Recent press articles in the U.S. on "secret prisons" for foreign fighters and a North Korean shipment to Ethiopia in violation of the U.N. sanctions regime were not helpful. But the Prime Minister understood the articles to be political infighting between the Democrats and Republicans over Administration policy. Nevertheless, Meles was particularly angry with Eritrea's destabilizing activities in the region, especially arms shipments to Somalia. Meles questioned why the U.S. was not more aggressive against Eritrea, given its restrictions on U.S. Embassy personnel working in Asmara, its arms shipments to Somalia, and support for extremist elements. The Prime Minister urged U.S. and international community support for cutting off funding to Eritrea from the diaspora, and for threats to President Isaias as means of curbing his destabilizing activities.

COMMENT

¶8. (S/NF) Somali Ambassador Farah told us separately that the TFG was preparing for renewed though limited fighting to clear out extremists from Mogadishu (ref B). It is unclear if the TFG is reaching out to the Ayr, or trying to settle old scores with a bitter clan rival. Ethiopia, while reaching out to Ayr leaders, is fully prepared for renewed fighting if the situation warrants. We cautioned Meles that another round of fighting could lead to greater instability and expansion of conflict to other clans. END COMMENT.
YAMAMOTO